

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, March 26, 1901

DICTATED. Volta Bureau, March 26, 1901. Dear Mabel: —

Received yesterday from Mr. Willis Moore a series of weather maps extending from February to February 16, 1901, showing an extraordinary series of atmospherical disturbances crossing the continent. He has also supplied other maps for the same period giving dew-point temperatures. This gives me something to study.

I have received a cablegram from Mr. Victor E. Nelson, American Consul at Bergen, Norway, stating that the American Consulate at Stockholm, Sweden will soon be vacant, and asking me to recommend him. I have written a letter to President McKinley indorsing his application.

Charlie had a dinner party last night. I was invited but preferred to go after dinner. He had Mr. and Mrs. Edward Everett Hale, Gen. and Mrs. Greeley, Mrs. Arthur Hopkins, and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert H. Grosvenor. and Prof. Langley, Grace looked well and very pretty, never saw Elsie looking so nicely. Charlie left for New York last night to attend the meeting of the American Telegraph and Telephone. Prof. and Mrs. Grosvenor arrived last night. Elsie and Bert went to the depot to meet them and took them up to their house.

I called at the Arlington last night on Mr. Paul du Chaillu, to invite him to be our guest at the National Geographic reception. I wrote a note to him in the afternoon to leave at the Arlington in case he should not be visible when I called for he was to leave town early this morning. Couldn't find the letter when I was starting for town. Sent Duncan down to Miss Safford's to find what she had done, and found she had MAILED IT, so the chances are he will never get it. He was to leave by an early train this morning and we know by past experience when letters are mailed in Georgetown over night are not delivered in

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Washington until quite late next day. Unless he has left an address at the Arlington so the letter can be forwarded, I am afraid he will not receive it.

I called at the Arlington about eleven o'clock at night, but did not see him. I then went up to Bert's house to see Prof. and Mrs. Grosvenor. Got interested in talking about flying machines until Elsie whispered to me that it was past twelve o'clock and Prof. Grosvenor had to deliver a lecture — an afternoon lecture — today. I walked the greater part of the way home, so it was pretty late before I reached the Bureau.

A telegram received from Dr. Phelps says that he must leave Baddeck at once on account of an abscess in his ear. He also reports that all, or nearly all, of the lambs expected have been born, but I have only received by mail records concerning thirteen of them.

I will wait until all the records are in before deciding whether or not I shall go up to Baddeck. I cannot trust John McKillop or anyone in Baddeck, to superintend the permanent marking of the lambs to be kept. I had made arrangements for Dr. Phelps to do this, but as unfortunately he has been obliged to leave Baddeck, this will necessitate my going there myself.

Under the circumstances will it be worth while my going to 3 Europe this year. I would prefer to go quietly up to Baddeck when the hot weather comes and remain quietly there until you return, and the Royal Institution lecture having been given up for this year no reason exists why I should cross the Atlantic again unless you need me.

While, of course, I should like to be with you all, traveling is a great interruption to consecutive work, and I should prefer not to go.

Uncle David seems to be much better, although very feeble he goes out in a wheeled chair.

INTERRUPTED.

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Aileen has just come in and in smiling at me. She says I am a model husband and seem to do nothing else but write letters to you. Have to rush down to Columbia Theater but can spare two minutes more.

THOUGHT

Whole problem of aerial transit resolves itself into a question of propulsion. One great difficulty has been how to make a machine — an experimental machine — that will carry a man on board — and give him some chance of getting experience in the management of the machine before he gets killed.

Now, it has occurred to me that we may copy nature's earliest attempts at flight, the winged creatures first came from the sea and we even now have flying fish, &c.

4

Now then, let us go on the water instead of on the land, use light boats like canoes that will glide on the surface of the water, fit them up with aerial-propeller wings, steer them with aerial rudders — nothing in the water — have your steam engine and yourself on board and drive away over the Baddeck lakes. When you can, by means of the aerial propellers glide along at a rate exceeding 32 feet a second, you will have the power of flight. Cock up your tail, and the end of the boat should rise out of the water like a duck about to rise. — Well, let it rise. If the machine can support itself in the air well and good — and if it comes down — why — it comes down ON THE WATER and no one need be hurt.

How is that?

P. S. I have to rush off to the lecture and so I will give Aileen the floor and I would like her to tell you how Aunt Ellen and what happened to poor Mary Horn. Aileen has the floor.

AGB

Dear Mabel: —

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I have never dictated a letter in my life before and I don't know how to go about it. But my mother has rheumatism pretty badly today, and I have just left her asleep.

Mary Horn has had a hard time of it, poor thing, she fell down and sprained her wrist pretty badly, and unfortunately it was the "other" wrist, so it made her very helpless, and not wishing to keep the bandage on it has taken a long time to get better. She sits up every day for a few hours now and will soon be probably as well as she ever will be. She is lucky to be in such a comfortable home where Mrs. Bell takes the best care of her and the servants are so good to her.

I am in a hurry to get back. Give all my love.

I forgot to tell you my father is getting along very well. We try not to consider him an invalid any longer.

Your loving cousin, Aileen.